

REMARKS

The Office Action dated May 1, 2008 has been received and reviewed. Claims 32 to 50 are pending in the application, and new claims 51 through 53 have been added by this Amendment. The matters raised in the Office Action will be addressed below.

I. Amendment to the Drawings

The Drawings have been amended to replace Figure 1 with a revised Figure 1 that identifies two of the claimed devices using dashed lines for clarity. Specifically, housing 7 of the battery-powered handpiece 10 that was shown in solid lines is now shown in dotted lines, and housing 25 of the charging station 20 is also shown in dotted lines. These clarifying amendments help to distinguish the respective housings from the circuitry contained within the housings, which may have led to a misunderstanding of the present invention.

II. Rejection Under 35 USC 102

Claims 32, 35-36 and 39 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,861,729 (Maeda et al.), as has been described in prior responses. Applicants have amended independent claims 32 and 36, amended dependent claim 46, and added new claims 51 through 53, in an effort to clarify certain aspects of the claimed invention. Support for these amendments, and the new claims, is provided throughout the application as filed. Claims 32 and 36, following amendment, read as follows:

32. Battery-powered handpiece, comprising:
 - (a) a housing;
 - (b) first and second charging contacts exposed on the housing, for connection to contacts of a battery contained within the housing; and
 - (c) a sensing contact positioned on the housing for detecting electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing between the first charging contact and the second charging contact.

36. Charger device for a battery-powered handpiece, comprising:
 - (a) a housing;

- (b) first and second charging pins exposed on the housing and adapted to contact charging contacts on a handheld device; and
- (c) a sensing pin on the housing for detecting at least one of (i) electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing between the first charging pin and the second charging pin; and (ii) electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing of a handheld device that is detected by a sensing contact of the handheld device.

Maeda et al. does not disclose or suggest the claimed subject matter. Specifically, Maeda et al. does not disclose or suggest a sensing contact positioned on the housing of a handpiece for detecting electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing of the handpiece between the first charging contact and the second charging contact. To the extent that a battery disclosed in Maeda et al. has some internal electrolytic current flow, it is not relevant to the current flow through a fluid film as claimed in claim 32. Similarly, with respect to claim 36, Maeda et al. does not disclose or suggest a sensing pin on the housing for detecting at least one of (i) electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing between the first charging pin and the second charging pin; and (ii) electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing of a handheld device that is detected by a sensing contact of the handheld device. For at least these reason, independent claims 32 and 36 are believed to be patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102 over Maeda et al.

Claims 35 and 39 depend from claims 32 and 36, respectively, and thus are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102 for at least the same reasons as claims 32 and 36. Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 32, 35, 36, and 39 is respectfully requested.

III. Rejection of Claims Under 35 USC 103

Claims 33-34 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. in view of U.S. Patent Publication U.S. 2002/0074970 (Kawashima). Claims 37 and 38 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,851,322 (Compoly et al.). Claim 40 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,945,809 (Inaba et al.). Claim 41 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al.

in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,867,798 (Inukai et al.). Claims 42-45 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. in view of Inukai et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,793,186 (Watabe et al.). And finally, claims 47-50 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,233,283 (Kennedy).

These claims all depend either directly or indirectly from independent claims 32 and 36, which are patentable over the primary reference Maeda et al. for at least the reasons mentioned in Section II above, which are incorporated by reference herein. None of the secondary references discloses or suggests a sensing contact positioned on the housing of a handpiece for detecting electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing of the handpiece between the first charging contact and the second charging contact, as claimed in claim 32. And none of those references discloses or suggests a sensing pin on the housing for detecting at least one of (i) electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing between the first charging pin and the second charging pin; and (ii) electrolytic current flow through a fluid film on the housing of a handheld device that is detected by a sensing contact of the handheld device, as set forth in claim 36. For at least those reasons, the dependent claims are patentable over the applied prior art, and reconsideration of the rejection of claims 33, 34, 37, 38, and 40 through 45 and 47 through 50 is respectfully requested.

IV. New Claims 51 Through 53

New independent claim 51 claims a combination of a handpiece and a charger, as set forth therein, and new dependent claims 52 and 53 add certain independently patentable features to that combination. Favorable consideration of these new claims is respectfully requested.

V. Conclusion

All outstanding rejections are believed to have been met and overcome. If a telephonic conference with Applicants' undersigned representative would be useful in advancing the prosecution of the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact

the undersigned at (651) 736-4050. A notice of allowance for all pending claims is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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